

EDITORIAL : VAN DIE REDAKSIE

DIET AND BODILY CONSTITUTION

Compared with some parts of the world, the history of medicine in South Africa is relatively short—a mere 400 years. During this time, South Africa has however produced a fair number of eminent medical men, and in recent years South African doctors have begun to make an appreciable contribution to the general progress of medical science.

For a number of years, Prof. J. F. Brock, of Cape Town, has directed a dynamic research and teaching department concerned with many aspects of medical practice. He has achieved a considerable international reputation as an authority on human nutrition, and medicine in South Africa has benefited greatly from his activities as an international medical ambassador. He has received many honours both at home and abroad, and last year the Ciba Foundation added to these when they arranged a special symposium in his honour at their headquarters in London.

From time to time the Ciba Foundation for the Promotion of International Cooperation in Medical and Chemical Research, honours distinguished scientists in this way. During the last year, in addition to Professor Brock, those honoured included Professor Charles Best, Sir Macfarlane Burnet and Prof. V. R. Khanolkar.

The meeting in honour of Professor Brock took the form of a study group on *Diet and Bodily Constitution*. Prof. R. A. McCance was the chairman and the participants included distinguished nutritionists from Europe, Asia, America and South Africa. Six papers were presented and these, together with the subsequent discussions, have been published handily by the Ciba Foundation.¹ Despite the highly specialized qualifications of the participants, this account of their deliberations will be appreciated by the most general reader, and the subject matter is of the widest possible application. There can be no discipline within or outside the ranks of medicine and science which is not interested in 'bodily constitution', and there is no form of life—from philosopher to virus—which is not to some extent concerned with 'diet'.

Some of the contributors dealt with nutritional experiments on animals, while others were predominantly concerned with studies on man. A feature of some of the papers and of the discussions was the emphasis placed on psychological factors. For example, Dr. N. Scrimshaw, of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), spoke on 'Nutrition and stress'. He had many important things to say about the increased susceptibility of malnourished persons to infections and about the role of infection and trauma in the development of nutritional deficiency. Some of the details which he presented were new, but the general concepts were old ones. But there was one new concept of great interest: his demonstration of the loss of nitrogen by healthy persons during emotional stress. His healthy

subjects were MIT freshmen who were fed with formula diets of constant protein content; they were studied in the middle of the academic term, then just before their end-of-year examinations, and again during the examinations. During both the pre-examination and the examination periods, eight out of eleven subjects excreted excessive amounts of nitrogen.

These findings reminded Dr. Elsie Widdowson, of Cambridge, of her own observations in Germany at the end of the war. The rate of growth of children in one orphanage was significantly greater than in another. Extra food was given to the faster-growing children and their rapid growth ceased immediately. At the same time, the previously slowly growing children began to grow much faster although their diet had not been changed. Dr. Widdowson attributed these unexpected findings to the fact that 'there was an unpleasant and unsympathetic woman in charge of the home where the children grew slowly during the first six months, and at the time when we gave the extra food to the other home she was transferred by the authorities from one home to the other. The children were so frightened of her and so unhappy that although they ate the extra food they failed to thrive on it'.

Dr. Scrimshaw's studies on the MIT freshman may provide an explanation for such vague concepts as 'maternal deprivation' and may account for some of those children who fail to thrive despite an apparently adequate diet and in the absence of organic disease. Henceforth, the traditional prescription of 'tender loving care' in these cases may be offered with the increased assurance which comes from scientific support.

Dr. G. F. M. Russell's paper 'Psychological factors in the control of food intake', also dealt with emotional matters. His observations were mainly derived from his study of the two extremes: anorexia nervosa and obesity. Psychoanalysts have ascribed overeating to a 'primitive and compensatory means of gaining satisfaction', but when this is translated into ordinary English, it simply means that some people eat to excess because they like eating. Similarly, to explain anorexia nervosa as 'a rejection of sexual and maternal instincts' does not really contribute much to the understanding of this complex disorder. It seems likely that there are several varieties of simple obesity and that the same physical appearances may result from quite different aetiological processes. Patients with anorexia nervosa may also resemble each other physically, but the underlying emotional disorder may vary considerably from case to case. Both in simple obesity and in anorexia nervosa Dr. Russell has observed that improvement in the feeding disorder may be accompanied by improvement or by deterioration in the mental state.

These are but some samples of the several interesting topics discussed in this excellent little book. In his closing

remarks Professor Brock referred to the difficulties inherent in the experimental study of the human constitution. He suggested that a special Foundation be created for the long-term study of the human constitution. How nice it

would be if this Foundation could be established in South Africa.

1. Wolstenholme, G. E. W. and O'Connor, M., eds. (1964): *Diet and Bodily Constitution*. London: Churchill.

ASPEKTE VAN DIE OUER-KIND VERHOUDING

Soos dit aan almal bekend is wat studente is van die menslike natuur óf wie se pligte die hantering van menslike gedrag insluit, leef ons in 'n tyd van ongekende spanning en drukte. Hierdie spanning en drukte ontstaan as gevolg van 'n groot aantal oorsake, bv. die tempo van die lewe in die algemeen, veranderde metodes van kommunikasie en vervoer—waardeer die probleme van 'n voorheen miskien geïsoleerde gemeenskap eensklaps die afmeting van 'n wêreldprobleem aanneem—genadelose ekonomiese mededinging, die veranderende koste- en behoeftestruktuur, politieke onstabiliteit op nasionale en internasionale vlakke, ens. Dié spanning en drukte, waarna ons hierbo verwys het en wat so algemeen voorkom dat dit eintlik as die neurotiese idioom van ons tyd beskryf kan word, ontstaan egter nie net uit heterogene, van-buite-gerigte bronne nie, maar dikwels ook uit innerlike omstandighede wat geleë is in die aard en natuur van die persoon self en in die samestelling van die gesin waarvan hy 'n essensiële deel is.

by die lees en bestudering van die werk, soos byvoorbeeld ouers en opvoeders van jongmense in die algemeen.

In sy behandeling van die onderwerp sluit die skrywer 'n bespreking in van die probleme van die kinderjare en puberteit; menstruasie; adolessensie; homoseksualiteit; prostitusie; kilheid; swangerskap, geboorte en die puerperium; die klimakterium; die middeljare en die ouderdom, ens. En al sy besprekings word gevoer op die basis van noukeurige waarneming en afleidinge wat gemaak word van die werklike gedrag van dogters en vroue.

Van sy benadering in die algemeen sê die skrywer self (soos vertaal): „Ek probeer veral om die vakke psigiatrie en obstetrie-ginekologie in verband met mekaar te bring. Die persoonlikheid van vrouens word basies bepaal deur die feit dat die vroulike organisme ingestel is op reproduksie—wat in die bekken gebeur (of nie gebeur nie) word bepaal deur wat in die gees gebeur. My ondervinding as psigiatrisiese konsultant aan 'n obstetrisiese afdeling het my begrip van geïntegreerde funksionering verbeter—onder andere dat, soos 'n verloskundige eenkeer gesê het, „die hipotalamus is 'n bekkenorgaan”. 'n Groot deel van die boek word dus gewy aan 'n onderwerp wat 'n deel vorm van die obstetrie en die ginekologie. My doel is nie soseer om die psigiatrisiese evangelie te versprei nie as om 'n holistiese benadering te bepleit en om aan te toon hoe kunsmatig dit is om die psige aan die sorg van een spesialis toe te vertrou en die voortplantingsorgane aan dié van 'n ander. Ek hoop dat my benadering van die onderwerp daartoe sal bydra om mense te laat sien hoe na wanaanpassing en voortplantingsfunksies aan mekaar verbonde is . . . en ook om aan te toon hoe te werk gegaan moet word om spanning te verlig.”

Die doel van die skrywer kan dus opgesom word deur te sê dat hy 'n beskrywing wil gee, op 'n breë vlak, van sy waarneming oor baie jare van een aspek van menslike gedrag (soos dit veral geopenbaar word in die moeder-dogter verhouding), en dat hy verder wil probeer om die grondslag daar te stel vir 'n program wat primêr gerig is op die voorkoming van wanaanpassing en geestesiekte. Dit is dus 'n boek waarvan almal wat belangstel in die basiese menslike situasie moet kennis dra.

1. Rheingold, J. C. (1964): *The Fear of Being a Woman*. New York en Londen: Grune & Stratton.

Die onlangse publikasie van die boek *The Fear of Being a Woman*¹ het opnuut 'n besondere bydrae gemaak tot ons insig in een aspek van hierdie innerlike en van-binnegerigte bron van spanning deur besondere lig te werp op die negatiewe en destruktiewe element wat daar so dikwels in die tradisionele moeder-dogter verhouding voorkom. Dit is trouens die oortuiging van die skrywer dat hierdie destruktiewe elemente 'n groot rol speel in die vorming en bepaling van die neurotiese gedrag van geslag na geslag van vrouens.

Die skrywer van hierdie buitengewone boek is 'n geneesheer wat meer as dertig jaar lank al optree as psigiatrisiese konsultant vir obstetrisiese en ginekologiese pasiënte. Die boek handel oor die ouer-kind verhouding, met spesiale verwysing na die moeder-dogter gesteldheid. Dit gaan die afbrekende uitwerking van sekere moederlike houdings op die grootmaak van kinders na, en die skrywer toon aan hoe die gevolge van hierdie negatiewe elemente aan die grond lê van die psigo-seksuele ontwikkeling van die kind en dus ook van versteurde biologiese funksie.

Die boek is dus sowel 'n omvattende sielkundige verhandeling oor vrouens as 'n behandeling van psigosomatiese aspekte van die ginekologie en die obstetrie. Dit is veral gerig aan geneesheer en ander werkers in die gedragswetenskap, maar baie ander persone sal ook baat vind